

NEWS

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Pets in the Classroom Program Grows from Success of Fish in the Classroom

Bel Air, MD - The Pet Care Trust has started a new program to fund classroom pets, following the successful implementation of their Fish in the Classroom program. In July 2007, the Trust announced the creation of the Fish in the Classroom program, which was designed to educate and to enhance the experiences of grade school students who learned about the fish and how to care for them. Through a partnership with the Florida Aquarium, the program initially educated and trained 100 teachers in Tampa, while providing vouchers for aquarium equipment and fish to the teachers.

Participating teachers surveyed had extremely positive responses to the program. "I am so excited to get the fish. My students will enjoy this program, especially those who do not have the opportunity to do this at home," confirmed one 4th grade teacher. Another elementary teacher shared, "I really enjoyed the workshop and I am so excited about setting up a new aquarium in my class...I am planning on starting the first lesson tomorrow. Thanks again for this great opportunity - the kids are going to love it!"

After the initial success of the Tampa Fish in the Classroom program, the Pet Care Trust was able to expand their efforts and aquarium partnership to the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, IL. In July 2009, Fish in the Classroom hosted a training session for 52 elementary school teachers. An additional component of the program was donating to the Big Shoulders Fund to provide classroom aquariums. Thomas Zbierski, Director, School Relations for the Big Shoulders Fund wrote, "I just wanted to follow up on the generous donation you made to the Big Shoulders Fund schools to provide classroom aquariums. The summer science program just ended and the attendees could not have been happier."

The response from teachers and students involved with Fish in the Classroom was so positive the Pet Care Trust was inspired to create the more diverse Pets in the Classroom program. This unique program offers elementary school teachers an opportunity to receive free supplies to house and care for pets in their classrooms. Kindergarten through sixth grade teachers can choose from small animals, reptiles, small birds or fish to keep in

their classroom and integrate into their curriculum. “We want to provide an easy way of supporting more diversified pets in the classroom,” noted Steve Segner, chairman of the PIC committee. “Through this program we hope to influence the students by instilling compassion and empathy for animals and developing responsible pet care.”

Having a pet in the classroom allows teachers to expand their curriculum in creative ways, while providing a positive experience for students. Caring for and interacting with a classroom pet can help children build self-esteem, while developing a sense of responsibility and valuable social skills.

The Pet Care Trust recognizes that teachers often have limited resources to enhance their classrooms and curriculum. Through a simple, online application process at www.petsintheclassroom.org teachers can become eligible to receive grants of \$50 to \$150 to support existing classroom pets or purchase new pets and equipment. The program hopes to fund 700 classrooms this year.

The Pet Care Trust is a national pet care education charity founded in 1997 that exists to educate the public in all aspects of responsible pet ownership, by conducting *ad hoc* research and advocating the benefits of pet ownership, as well as promoting high standards of education and training across the pet care business community.

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